Sex cells

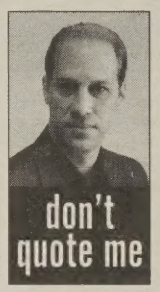
Freak shows aplenty

BY GREG FULTON

"Dr. Laura gets very good ratings and brings in very good revenues, and that's the business we're in."

So says a local radio station executive weighing in on last week's protest over Dr. Laura Schlessinger bringing her ever-growing brand of hate radio to local television (Fox affiliate WAGA) this fall.

The event begs for a brief history of the nationally syndicated talker's years already spent on Atlanta's airwaves, which went unmentioned in a nine-paragraph article on the back page of the Living section of the Cox Enterprises-owned *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* May 10 and in coverage by local TV news.



Schlessinger debuted in 1994 on Cox-owned WSB AM, enjoyed cross-promotional ads in the *AJC* and was a ratings hit. Last May, the show's production company switched to Clear Channel-owned WGST AM in what became a celebrated coup for the station.

Two years ago Schlessinger adopted the Judeo-Christian religion, and the gay and lesbian bashing began.

From transcripts of past shows airing on either station, Schlessinger repeatedly touts "reparative therapy" for gays and lesbians, warns of their "dangerous ideology," "despicable" same-sex adoption attempts, "deviant sexual behavior" and so on.

Two days after the protest, Canadian broadcasting officials ruled that Schlessinger's anti-gay remarks must be censored there, but come this September, Dr. Laura (and her ad revenue) will be unfettered on WAGA television and will remain so on WGST radio.

◆ ◆ ◆

Some potential embarrassment for CNN correspondent Art Harris is found in the pages of a new book that cobbles together orchestrated attempts to smear Bill Clinton originating out of Little Rock prior to the 1992 election.

The Hunting of the President: The Ten-Year Campaign to Destroy Bill and Hillary Clinton, is written by former *Village Voice* staffer Joe Conason and former *Newsweek* editor Gene Lyons.

In it, a taped call between Harris and a Little Rock conspirator deals with sex rumors about Clinton, which Harris was skirting for a 1992 *Penthouse* article on Gennifer Flowers accompanied by nude pictures.

"Did either of them [Michelle or Louwanda] describe Bill's equipment," Harris inquired, "and how big or little it was? I know from other sources ... "

"I heard his equipment was rather dainty," [Larry] Case laughed.

"Yeah, you got it." Harris laughed too. "And that he makes up for it with a lot of oral sex."

Well, yikes, I don't know any reporter trying to get from A to B who would want his or her source-schmoozings out there, but the point is not to rub the two-time Emmy winner's nose in it, but, as the book does, to point out that few institutional media reporters were left unsullied as tabloidization peaked.

After seeing the pages, Harris, who was not contacted by the authors, released this statement: "There's a lot I could say to set the record straight, but why dignify such biased and inaccurate reporting with any comment at all?"

◆ ◆ ◆

It turns out *AJC* reporters learned of the Ray Lewis "sex tape" within one month of the post-Super Bowl murders, but didn't break the story until Sunday, April 30, one day before Lewis was in town for pretrial hearings. Why? First, reporters danced around with a tipster wanting to sell the tape, then spent time online to find video producer Luke Campbell's site to order it. But to be sure, reporters had to purchase three X-rated tapes and view them all before finding Lewis and co-defendant Joseph Sweeting taking in the sex acts on "Luke's Freak Show: Cancun 1999."

The *AJC* printed stills, then gave the tape to WSB TV for airing May 1, the first day of the current ratings sweeps period, leaving the other TV stations scrambling to get it on the air.

The news judgment to use it was that it puts the two defendants together though Lewis claimed early on he barely knew Sweeting. That's fine, but the trouble is none of the stills or video actually showed them together, leaving little but titillation for the viewing public, now the jury pool. ◆

Greg Fulton can be reached at Gfulton@mindspring.com or 770-980-1870

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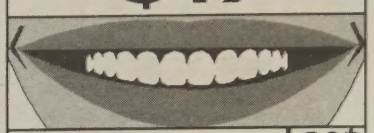

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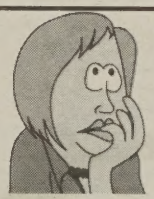
THE BLUES

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- MUSCLE ACHES, BACK ACHES, HEADACHES
- LOSS OF INTEREST, PLEASURE, MOTIVATION
- DIFFICULTY SLEEPING, LACK OF ENERGY, EASILY FATIGUED
- INDECISION, POOR CONCENTRATION OR MEMORY, WORRYING
- THOUGHTS OF WORTHLESSNESS, HOPELESSNESS, OR EVEN THAT LIFE IS NOT WORTH LIVING

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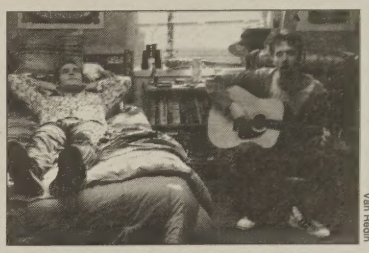
Road kill

Road Trip *a detour not worth taking*

BY EDDY VON MUELLER

review

1/2
Road Trip
- Directed by Todd Phillips
- Stars Breckin Meyer, Seann William Scott, Tom Green
- Rated R
- Opens May 19



Van Redin

Seann William Scott (left) and Tom Green in *Road Trip*

It's probably too late to stop *Road Trip*.

With all those *American Pie*-faced ads everywhere (only its *cooler* than *American Pie*, see, cause, like, they're all, like, *naked*) and TV spots for the thing popping up every time MTV plows through one of the four-minute blocks of driveling content and gets back to showing commericals, there is probably no way in hell to keep DreamWork's calculated new over-the-top college comedy from drawing zillions of unsuspecting young people into theaters this weekend.

But even though *Road Trip* did do a considerable amount of shooting right here in jolly ol' Georgia, bringing much-needed production work to our film community, that does not release me from the oath I took at Film Criticism Camp or from my obligation to the public. Dammit, the people have a right to know that, while there have been worse films made about college hijinks, most of them had the words "Nerds" and "Revenge" somewhere in the title.

Framed as a tall tale told by a perpetual undergraduate (professional prankster Tom Green) to a group of prospective freshmen touring a campus in Ithaca, N.Y., *Road Trip* mostly concerns Josh (Breckin Meyer) and his friends trying get to Austin, Texas, in time to intercept a package accidentally mailed to his longtime girlfriend, which contains a graphic videotape of him cheating on her. This is funny enough for a start, but rather than turning that crass but promising set-up into something at least vaguely resembling, oh, I don't know, a *film*, *Road Trip* proceeds as a series of totally unrelated one-liners, cribbed from other, better movies or from the joke pages of certain Larry Flynt publications which shall remain nameless.

The problem is not one of maturity, or even of bad taste. There is a place in American film comedy for rectal exams, frat parties, gratuitous nudity, snake tossing, sperm donations, missed exams, fat jokes, voyeurism, Klan jokes, priapic pot-smoking Viagra grandpas and random encounters with zany strangers. *Road Trip* stumbles because rather than advancing what little plot there is, most of these vignettes are geared toward getting a rise out of the audience at any cost. But in his single-minded quest for the one-per-scene belly-laugh (or equivalent responses generated even farther South), director Todd Phillips, who landed this gig after executive producer Ivan Reitman saw his superb 1998 documentary *Frat House*, fails to build any compelling characters that might tie it all together — characters like the ones that made movies such as *Animal House* and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* so memorable. Green's loopy tour guide is by far the most appealing person in the film, and he doesn't even get to go on the trip!

Will *Road Trip* make you laugh? Almost certainly, if the filmmakers have to rob a blind girl to do it. But if you think there's more to comedy than that, be warned: You're in for a bumpy ride. ◆

◆ Short subs continued from page 106

equally brilliant piece by Erik Canuel that's even shorter but, thanks to the director's commercial background, gets everything in. **Weekends at Fernbank Museum of Natural History.** — *SW*

Continuing

AMERICAN PSYCHO ★★★1/2 (R) Director Mary Harron has salvaged a seemingly unredeemable, minor shock-novel by Bret Easton Ellis and turned it into a whipsmart funny satire and pungent critique of male competition, money lust and a world of appearances. Christian Bale delivers an entirely credible and compelling take on Ellis's Wall Street yuppie who turns killer, and, commendably, never glamorizes his virulent misanthropy. A coolly, stylishly shot piece of cultural commentary, *American Psycho* has some regrettable slasher-film hack touches but remains an admirable alchemic transformation of rubbish into, if not gold, then a pretty shiny likeness. — *FF*

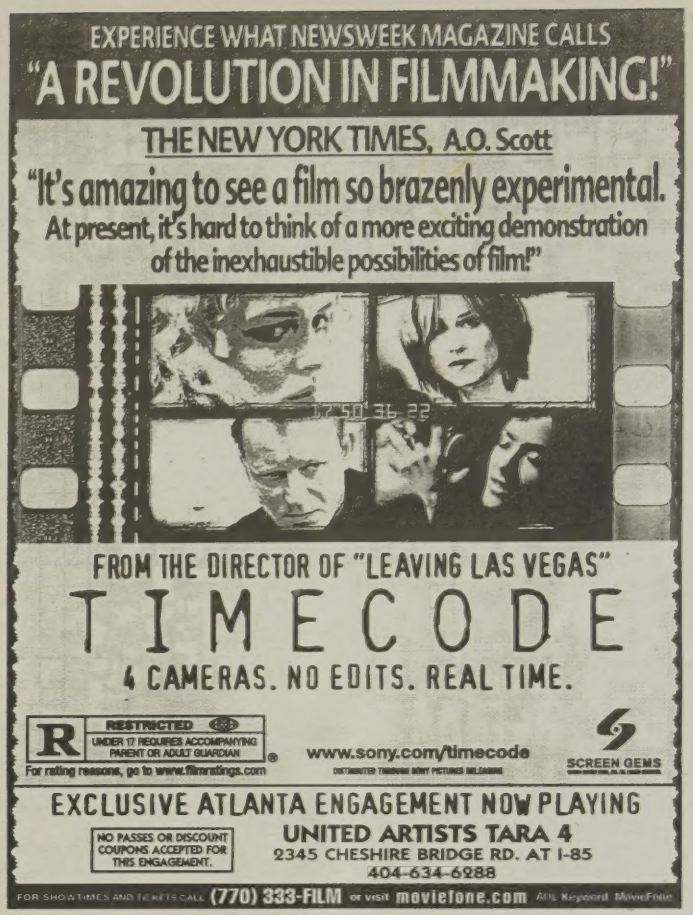
BATTLEFIELD EARTH (PG-13) ★★ Not funny, not exciting, not attractive, this is one losing *Battlefield*. It didn't need bad publicity (Internet rumors that this adaptation of Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard's sci-fi novel would subliminally convert viewers to the sect) to tank; bad filmmaking should take care of that. A tired plot, ugly production design and chaotic action scenes that make it impossible to tell what's happening mark yet another post-apocalyptic tale of a small band of human survivors (led by Barry Pepper as Jonnie Goodboy Tyler) who fight to retake Earth from their alien captors (John Travolta plays Psychlo security chief Terl). — *SW*

EAST IS EAST (R) ★★★. A raw and bawdy look at the culture clash of a Pakistani family in Manchester, England, in 1971. Teenage sons rebel against the marriages arranged by their strict father (Om Puri), leading to both tense domestic confrontations and comedy that can go from outrageous to coarse. Fortunately Puri's remarkable, central performance keeps his character from being a one-dimensional monster. — *CH*

CENTER STAGE (PG-13) ★★ 1/2 Nicholas Hytner's law-abiding drama follows the unwritten law that if a movie features good dancing, the story has to suck. It doesn't miss many cliches — including token gay Shakiem Evans getting injured before the finale as in *A Chorus Line* and naive Amanda Schull learning the meaning of casual sex the hard way — as teen dancers compete for precious jobs in Peter Gallagher's ballet company; but the generation it's aimed at may not have seen it all before. Ethan Stiefel's dancing almost makes it worth sitting through for the rest of us. — *SW*

ERIN BROCKOVICH (R) ★★★ A true populist movie that deserves its inevitable popularity. Steven Soderbergh's film is a perfect vehicle for Julia Roberts. In this true story, she's a working-class woman who dresses like a working girl. In a menial job at Albert Finney's law firm, she stumbles on PG&E's involvement in pollution that poisons an

◆ Short subs continued on page 110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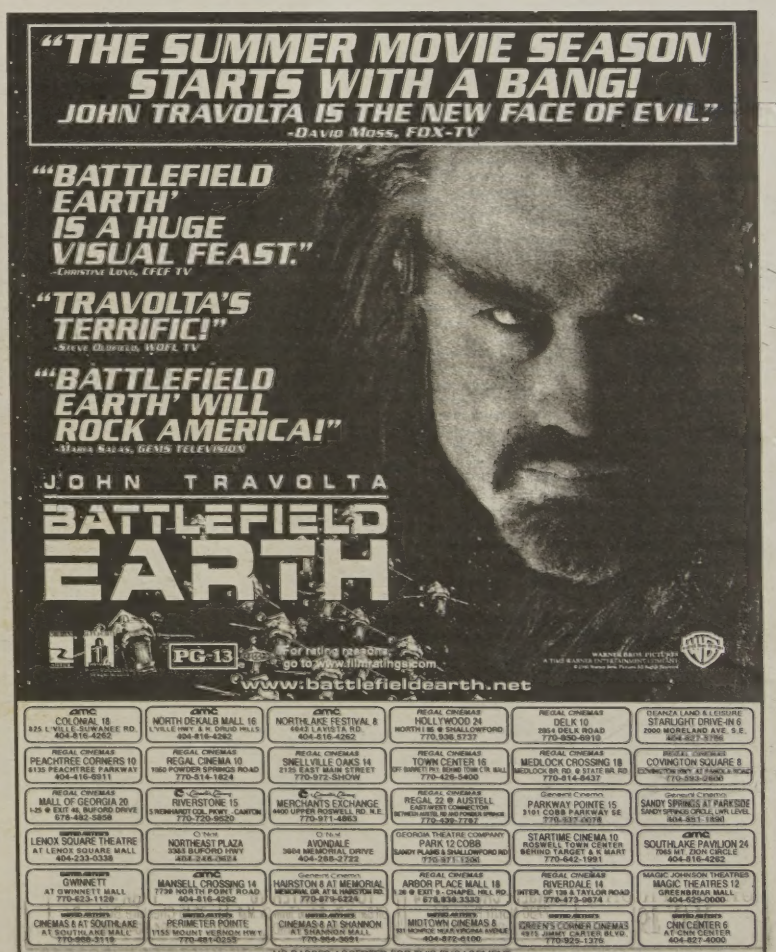
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Second reel

Film festival wraps up nine days of screenings

The 24th annual Atlanta Film & Video Festival, presented by IMAGE Film & Video Center, continues through May 21.

An awards ceremony, giving independent filmmakers more than $55,000 in in-kind services, will precede the Closing Night Gala at the High Museum's hill Auditorium on May 21 at 5:30 p.m.

Schedule and reviews follow.

Wednesday, May 17

NARRATIVE COMPETITION SHORTS ★★★ The trouble with many short films is that young directors, eager to strut their stuff, use them as style resumés, rather than attending to the actual possibilities of down-sized cinema. Thankfully, whatever other problems might lurk in this mixed bag of cine-minis, they all at least have stories to tell. The hands-down highlights, though, are *Paradosis*, a black-and-white pseudo-silent about a stolen nutcracker that is everything a short should be — balanced, lean and keenly aware of what you can get away with in a few minutes, and *In God We Trust*, the swift-running saga of a dead man who takes advantage of a computer glitch (they're still using Windows in the Afterlife) to rack up a few extra points in the game of Life before his final judgment. **Noon at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *Eddy Von Mueller*

DEAD DOGS A neo-noir thriller in which Tom's quiet life takes a sudden turn upon the arrival of his estranged brother, Derek, who blows back into town with Tom's ex-girlfriend. **2 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.**

STUDENT COMPETITION SHORTS ★★★ This smorgasbord of student shorts shows just what kids can do when they just say "no" to accounting and stay in school. Film school, that is. To keep beating this dead horse, standouts include the fascinating, thoughtful, mythopoeic animation **"Minotaur"** (Valedictorian); **"Sweater Yarn"** (Most Popular), an irresistible mockumentary-ish story about a girl who adjusts a gift from grandma to suit herself; charming, coming-of-age in the Catskills comedy **"Allerd Fishbein's In Love"** (Most Likely to Be Mistaken for a Woody Allen Picture); and **"Vend"** (Most Paranoid), a clever, Kafka-esque trifle about an impossibly anal lab drone who starts getting body parts instead of Barq's out of the office coke machine. **4 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *EM*

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING ★★★ Imagine a white trash *War of the Roses* done in the style of "Cops" and you've got the gist of this nasty but frequently hilarious comedy. Soon-to-be divorced Don (Bob Mills) and Donatella (Petra Westen) go at each other hammer and tongs while sharing the same house. Filmmaker Frank Novak gathers a credible assortment of supporting dopers, police officers and men's rights activists, and the small, telling details are often amusing: Don's favorite pastimes are swilling beer, listening to "Free Bird" and collecting "Puppet Master" action figures. If only the acting were more polished and the shifts to dark comedy more assured, *Good Housekeeping* would have the makings of a cult hit. **8 p.m.at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *Curt Holman*

SEDUCING MAARYA Maarya enters into an arranged marriage with a man who's involved with another man in his band, and is courted by her father-in-law, who arranged the marriage. **10 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.**

Thursday, May 18

GOOD KURDS BAD KURDS ★★★★ Journalist Kevin McKiernan's video documentary makes a crucial distinction between what America perceives as "good" Kurds — those whose struggle in Iraq helps the American political machine vilify and generate propaganda against Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein — and the "bad" Kurds persecuted in Turkey. "Bad" Kurds don't register on our news media's radar screen because publicizing their plight would give Allied, "democratic" Turkey a bad rap and, hitting closer to home, acknowledge U.S. involvement in the civil war in southeast Turkey by supplying Turkish Armed Forces with American Blackhawk and Cobra helicopters and F-16 bombers. McKiernan's documentary is a thorough, compelling history lesson such as we never got in school, chronicling yet another chapter in America's manifest destiny of self-interest. **Noon at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *Kate Lueker*

SHIFT ★★★ A veritable prisoner in her own life, Melanie is stuck in a dead-end job with a deadbeat husband until she gets a phone call from Louis (Christopher Melonia), a prison inmate in a work program conducting a routine phone survey. Compelling in the way that frank conversations with strangers usually are, Kelly Anderson's *Shift* poses some interesting political questions regarding prison reform and whether inmates are in debt to society. The film also addresses the politics of Melanie's infatuation with a prisoner she's never met. Rather than making a token "shift," exchanging one twisted relationship for another, Melanie succeeds in making a genuine departure. **2 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *KL*

LIVE NUDE GIRLS UNITE! A funny, first-person documentary about a group of strippers who created the only union of exotic dancers in the United States. Screens with **"Moonshine." 4 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.**

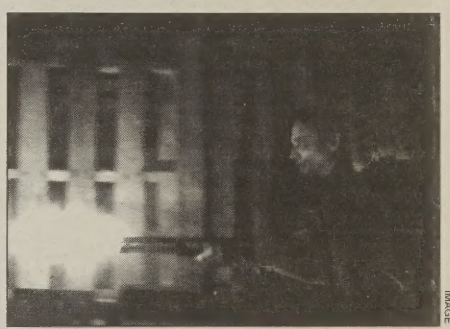
ANIMATION EXTRAVAGANZA ★★★ Most animation compilations prove to be mixed bags of merry silliness and artsy ambition, and this is no exception. On the fun side of the equation are the out-of-nowhere sight gags of **"Atlas Takes a Drink"** and the "Candid Camera" premise of Bill Plympton's **"Surprise Cinema,"** in which, say, the toilet of an unsuspecting man is replaced with a live alligator. It's hard to stay patient with the shrill **"Atomic Roadkill,"** which shows the journey of a post-apocalyptic rock band (and features a rotoscoped Christopher Walken doing a song-and-dance number). The highlight is the ineffably lovely **"When the Day Breaks,"** which follows ordinary people (given the heads of animals) and household objects and achieves an unexpected kind of transcendence. **May 18 at 7:30 and 9:30 p.m., Lefont Garden Hills Cinema.** — *CH*

NEW BLACK CINEMA ★★1/2 A collection of four short films, including Atlanta filmmaker Narcel Reedus' **"The Secret of Passionate Love,"** in which an unhappy couple discovers the secret of passionate love for themselves. Whether the "secret" is achieving union with the divine and reclaiming your cosmic roots through good old-fashioned love making, or joining hands with your maker — in prayer or in death — remains unclear. "The Secret of Passionate Love" features some interesting monologues, but fails to break it down for you like only your best friend knows how. **8 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *KL*

THE BOYS NEXT DOOR ★★ As usual with programs of short films, quality varies with this collection of shorts on gay themes. The 30-minute opener,**"Crush,"** certainly one of the strongest offerings here, tells the story of 16-year-old Robbie, who's forced to spend a summer with relatives in rural Illinois. Crushes involving his 12-year-old cousin Tina, a Backsteet Boys-like pop band and a boy from town lead to some misunderstandings and an unexpected milestone summer. Tom Brown's comic film, **"Das Clown"** parodies educational high school filmstrips, telling the story of a killer clown doll that finds love in an unexpected place. **10 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *Andrew Alexander*

Friday, May 19

TEMPORARY GIRL ★★★ It sometimes seems the only audiences interested in the rash of indie films about struggling actors are the struggling actors who star in them. The exuberantly goofy *Temporary Girl*, which overcomes some cheesy effects to seduce you with its zany charm, may be an exception to that rule — a film written by, directed by and starring Lisa Kotin about the creative salt mines of the thespian's life. An ample part of the film's charm is its oddball heroine, a swan struggling to emerge from a Sandra Bernhard body, a 40-year-old juggling a floundering acting career and a temp job. — *Felicia Feaster.* Screens with:



***Severed* screens May 19 at midnight**

"Picture Day" * 1/2 Maybe it is true that a picture is worth a thousand words, but Steven Bognar's short film composed of 12 flash frames for each of the 601 kids at an Ohio public elementary school says surprisingly little. Although you can't help but be struck by the kids' goofy faces, the seriousness reflected off their Coke-bottle glasses and the wary shyness of little girls, in "Picture Day's" deluge of faces, not one child dwells in the memory. Ultimately, the portrait of these children — the questions they raise and their 3rd grade responses — is superficial at best. **Noon at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *KL*

THEME: MURDER ★★★ Shot over a period of 20 years, Martha Swetzoff's hour-long documentary examines the murder of her own father in 1968, which was rumored to be gay-related. The film, shot in several different formats including 16mm, black-and-white and color mini-DV, is gripping and moving, managing to touch on some pretty hefty themes, most notably the long-term effects of violence and the struggle to make sense of the past. **2 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *AA*

NUYORICAN DREAM ★★★★ With its painfully accurate portrait of the struggles of a Puerto Rican family living on the poverty line in Brooklyn, this engrossing documentary is narrated by the one member of the family, Robert Torres, who's managed to escape. But the person who stands out the most is the family's long-suffering matriarch, who's been mopping up after others' disasters since she was a child and who now single-handedly bears the burden of her children's drug addiction, jail time and brood of abandoned grandchildren. When she finally crumbles near the film's end, you get a painful taste of the engulfing, endless despair of living in a world with no hope for the future. **4 p.m. at AMC Phipps Plaza.** — *FF*

◆ AFVF continued on page 109

Sex cells

Freak shows aplenty

BY GREG FULTON

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◆ ◆ ◆

Some potential embarrassment for CNN correspondent Art Harris is found in the pages of a new book that cobbles together orchestrated attempts to smear Bill Clinton originating out of Little Rock prior to the 1992 election.

The Hunting of the President: The Ten-Year Campaign to Destroy Bill and Hillary Clinton, is written by former *Village Voice* staffer Joe Conason and former *Newsweek* editor Gene Lyons.

In it, a taped call between Harris and a Little Rock conspirator deals with sex rumors about Clinton, which Harris was skirting for a 1992 *Penthouse* article on Gennifer Flowers accompanied by nude pictures.

"Did either of them [Michelle or Louwanda] describe Bill's equipment," Harris inquired, "and how big or little it was? I know from other sources ... "

"I heard his equipment was rather dainty," [Larry] Case laughed.

"Yeah, you got it." Harris laughed too. "And that he makes up for it with a lot of oral sex."

Well, yikes, I don't know any reporter trying to get from A to B who would want his or her source-schmoozings out there, but the point is not to rub the two-time Emmy winner's nose in it, but, as the book does, to point out that few institutional media reporters were left unsullied as tabloidization peaked.

After seeing the pages, Harris, who was not contacted by the authors, released this statement: "There's a lot I could say to set the record straight, but why dignify such biased and inaccurate reporting with any comment at all?"

◆ ◆ ◆

It turns out *AJC* reporters learned of the Ray Lewis "sex tape" within one month of the post-Super Bowl murders, but didn't break the story until Sunday, April 30, one day before Lewis was in town for pretrial hearings. Why? First, reporters danced around with a tipster wanting to sell the tape, then spent time online to find video producer Luke Campbell's site to order it. But to be sure, reporters had to purchase three X-rated tapes and view them all before finding Lewis and co-defendant Joseph Sweeting taking in the sex acts on "Luke's Freak Show: Cancun 1999."

The *AJC* printed stills, then gave the tape to WSB TV for airing May 1, the first day of the current ratings sweeps period, leaving the other TV stations scrambling to get it on the air.

The news judgment to use it was that it puts the two defendants together though Lewis claimed early on he barely knew Sweeting. That's fine, but the trouble is none of the stills or video actually showed them together, leaving little but titillation for the viewing public, now the jury pool. ◆

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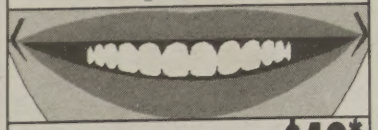

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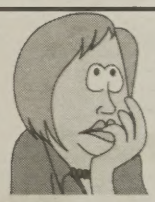
THE BLUES

- FEELING DOWN, SAD, DEPRESSED
- MUSCLE ACHES, BACK ACHES, HEADACHES
- LOSS OF INTEREST, PLEASURE, MOTIVATION
- DIFFICULTY SLEEPING, LACK OF ENERGY, EASILY FATIGUED
- INDECISION, POOR CONCENTRATION OR MEMORY, WORRYING
- THOUGHTS OF WORTHLESSNESS, HOPELESSNESS, OR EVEN THAT LIFE IS NOT WORTH LIVING

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